

TOPSOIL

Information for and about Indiana SWCDs and their conservation partners

No. 435

July/August 2002

Staff Honored at DNR Awards Ceremony

Division Director, Harry Nikides, received the 2001 Division Director of the Year Award at the Annual Awards Ceremony at the Indiana Government Center South in Indianapolis on May 16.

John R. Goss, DNR Director, presented the award to Nikides on behalf of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

Nominated by Paul Ehret, DNR Deputy Director, for his innovative and outstanding management skills through the state's current budgetary crisis, Nikides' finance management skills resulted in a savings of more than \$500,000, without loss or reduction in service to the Division of Soil Conservation's customers. Moreover, Nikides' willingness to pitch in and help other DNR Divisions played a significant role in the White River Citizen Advisory Council's endorsement of purchasing conservation easements along the White River corridor. Without Nikides' contribution and ability to work with corresponding county soil and water conservation districts regarding the obtainment of these easements, the use of settlement funds may never have come about.

"Overall, Nikides' composure under stress and overall fairness is admired by his staff and he universally has the respect of those that work with him," stated Ehret. "When it is all said and done, Harry Nikides has more than earned his recognition as DNR's 2001 Division Director of the Year Award."

Randy Braun, Stormwater and Sediment Control Program Chief for the DNR Division of Soil Conservation, received the William Andrews Award at the DNR 2002 Annual Awards Ceremony on May 16. This Award, named for William Andrews, the first Deputy Director of the Bureau of Water and Mineral Resources, is awarded to the DNR employee selected as the ESM Employee of



Paul Ehret (left) and John Goss (right) present Harry Nikides (middle left) with the 2002 Division Director of the Year Award and Randy Braun (middle right) with the William Andrews Award.

the Year.

Braun was nominated by Harry Nikides, and is the first Division of Soil Conservation employee to receive the William Andrews Award. "Randy's impact on behalf of the Department and his service to the citizens of Indiana can truly be said to be statewide, and we were proud to nominate him as ESM Employee of the Year for the Department of Natural Resources in 2002," stated Harry Nikides, Division Director.

Braun has been the leader of Indiana's urban conservation program since 1993, and has developed a reputation among his colleagues both in and outside of the State as an authority on urban conservation issues. Through his leadership and by his example, Division employees address erosion and sediment issues on thousands of construction sites annually as well as process enforcement referrals in cooperation with the Indiana Department of Environmental Management.

Randy's ongoing involvement to coordinate program activities with the Indiana Department of Environmental Management and efforts to educate all State agencies and local municipalities on Phase II of the EPA Natural Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) demonstrates his belief in the goals of the Division and Department and his faith in the strength and knowledge of Division Employees.

Inside Topsoil

*Committee Will Help SWCDs With
New Challenges* 2

Where's Your Conservation Etiquette 3

Topsoil Enters Cyberspace 4

Places To Go and People to See 4

Committee Will Help SWCDs Face New Challenges

The Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation District (IASWCD) Executive Committee and the State Soil Conservation Board recently initiated the formation of an Ad Hoc District Outlook Committee. The committee, which includes representatives from the Indiana Conservation Partnership (ICP), will look at the challenges Indiana's Conservation Districts face and recommend ways to help districts prepare to meet them. Examples of new challenges and opportunities include helping communities, watershed stakeholders, and landowners deal with improving the water quality of streams that are listed by Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) as impaired and subject to the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) process, Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems requirements (MS4), Rule 5 Urban Erosion Control, helping county health departments address septic system failures, and protecting prime farmland from development. In addition to all these challenges we now have a new Farm Bill that provides an 80 percent increase in funding for conservation programs that will accelerate the implementation of conservation practices on private working lands. Districts will play important roles in helping USDA educate landusers about these accelerated conservation program

TOPSOIL is published bi-monthly primarily for Indiana Soil and Water Conservation District supervisors and employees plus partner agency personnel by:

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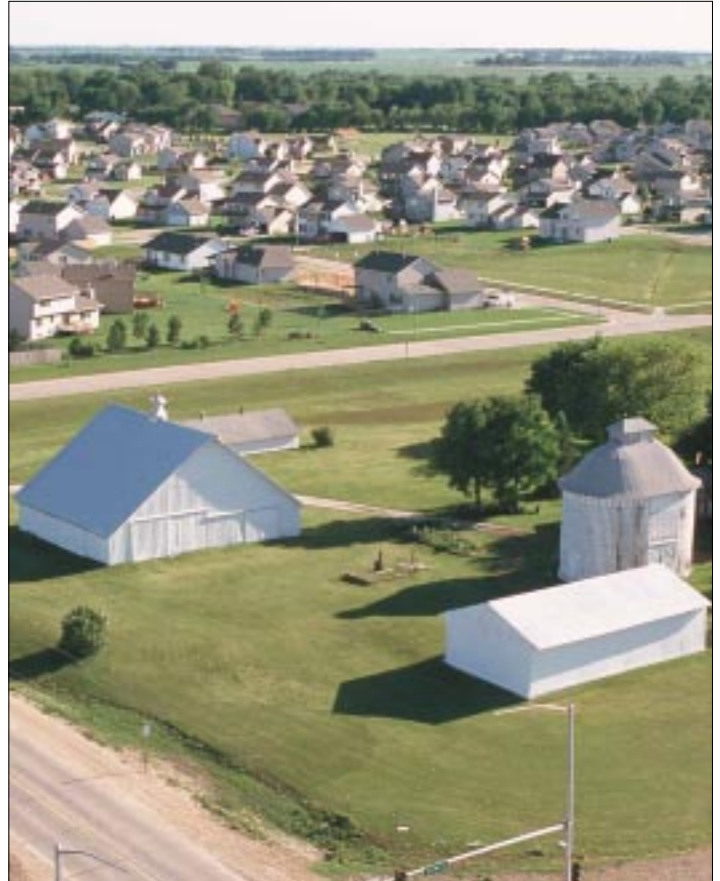
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opportunities, administer programs, and provide technical assistance.

Over the last several months the Conservation Program Specialists Team developed a draft vision document for Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), which includes a purpose statement, visions of success statements, and measures of success. It was presented to the conservation partnership leaders and the IASWCD Executive Committee. All were very supportive and agreed to use the draft statements as a framework for the new District Outlook Committee to begin its work. In addition, the leaders supported dedicating a significant portion of the 2002 Supervisor Summer Splash and 2003 SWCD Annual Conference to "building district program capacity".

The IASWCD Executive Committee charged to the District Outlook Committee to develop a plan to make the following Visions of Success statements become a reality for



all districts:

1. The district is respected for putting people with questions and concerns about soil, water, and related natural resource issues in touch with people with answers and solutions.
2. The district is recognized as the local hub for connecting land users to direct sources of educational, financial, and technical assistance for applying conservation practices and best management technologies on the land to address soil and water quality problems.
3. Local citizens recognize the district as a key leader in improving soil and water quality.

The following people have agreed to serve on the committee:

Steve Graber, Committee Chair and IASWCD President
Christa Jones, IASWCD
Travis Nolcox, State Soil Conservation Board
Ellsworth Christmas, State Soil Conservation Board
Harry Nikides, IDNR Division of Soil Conservation
Gail Peas, IDNR Division of Soil Conservation
Les Zimmerman, SWCD Supervisor
Theresa Gabaree, IDEA
Brett Canaday, District Employee
Greg Lake, District Employee
Terry Stephenson, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Jimmy Bricker, Extension Educators
Jim Lake, Conservation Program Specialist
April Ingle, IASWCD

Where's Your Conservation Etiquette?

Soil and Water Conservation professionals spend a large part of their professional time dealing with conservation issues and convincing others to do the same. But do you leave that conservation etiquette at the office? Do you practice “best management practices” in your home? If not, are you truly living an environmental and conservation stewardship lifestyle? Would there be enough evidence of “best management practices” in your home to convict you of being a true conservation professional?

Being conservation professional is a demanding job. Keeping pace with the hot topics and best management practices is only the beginning. The changing work environment and the recent Farm Bill are enough to keep even the most seasoned professional stirring the coffee cup and wondering about the future of grassed waterways. Underneath all of this is the notion that each of us is also a role model of good stewardship and conservation in our local communities. And in an agricultural sense, we are. Yet, are you a good conservationist in your home or community organization? The odds are that many conservation professionals are not practicing good conservation and stewardship in their homes, communities, and churches.

While teaching a biology class for adult education, I have come across some very informative websites with relevant information on practicing stewardship at home as well as at the office. Here are the web addresses and brief descriptions of the top six picks for July and August.

<http://www.consciouschoice.com/environs/index.html>

Contains articles written by conservation professionals from across the United States, including articles on creating “rain gardens” to reduce storm water runoff, natural landscaping, and others.

<http://www.earthshare.org>

Offers a site especially for federal employees and provides free environmental action tips for newsletters. By making simple, everyday changes, we can make significant strides in improving the environment.

<http://www.iowacorn.org/ef.htm>

Offers information on ethanol. Looking for clean, renewable fuel and another market for No. 2 yellow corn? Read about it at this web site.

<http://www.ces.purdue.edu/sa/index.html>

One from Purdue University that offers key information for farm families and sustainable agriculture. Read about healthy farm ecosystems, marketing and profit, and other sustainable and profitable farm operations.

<http://www.organicstyle.com/>

A website for a trendy magazine dedicated to living the organic life. This web site offers tips and purchase locations for organic foods, clothing, and coffee! (One of my favorites) Talk about supporting family farms and the environment!



Well worth a visit.

<http://ecoiq.com/>

Provides media products and services to promote community, business, and personal decisions that are economically and ecologically beneficial — decisions that are eco-intelligent. There are videos, books, and other materials. Look at the list for water and wastewater. This one is great for the District newsletter!

There is plenty of sound information available for your professional and personal learning. Read about conservation that is more than a grassed waterway or warm season grass planting. Then make a simple change in your daily life that will make a difference in the environment.

*Submitted by: Brian Gauck
Conservation Program Specialist*

Topsoil Enters Cyberspace

Daily our communities are changing, for some it is the growth of urban dwellings, others it is the development of industrial centers, and for those of us who contribute to the bi-monthly production of Topsoil it is the birth of web-based publications.

In today's fast-paced society, subscribers who once sat down with a cup of coffee and the morning paper, now peruse the headlines on their PDA while they grab a latte' at the local Starbucks. What was once considered the norm is now considered something of the past. Personal computers, PDAs, and cell phones have replaced daily newspapers, newsletters, and periodicals. So too, Topsoil is changing.

Starting in September, you will read Topsoil in cyberspace. Time-sensitive bulletins will be publicized regularly on the Division of Soil Conservation's website, as well as distributed via snail mail to district supervisors who do not utilize the Web.

Topsoil is not dead, but revitalized! Join us as we launch Topsoil into cyberspace.

TOPSOIL WEBSITE

You can access *Topsoil* through the Division of Soil Conservation Website at www.in.gov/dnr/soilcons.

Places to Go—People to See

July 13-17, 2002

Setting the Pace for Conservation – SWCS Annual Conference & Expo

Location: The Westin Hotel, Indianapolis, Indiana

Contact: Becky Fletcher at 317/290-3250

August 2-3

Supervisor Summer Splash

Location: Amish Acres, Nappanee, Indiana

Contact: Harold Doremire at 765/494-8388

August 28 – 29, 2002

Montgomery County SWCD Field Days

Location: Montgomery County

Contact: Connie Cleek at 765/362-1194 ext. 3 or connie-cleek@iaswcd.org

NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

To contribute an article to the Topsoil Bulletin, contact Deborah Messenger at 317/233-3872.

Printed on recycled paper



CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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